

Selected Primary Resources Related to American and Virginia History*

Colonial and Virginia through the American Revolution

Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789. 34 vols. Washington, DC: GPO, 1904-1937. VA REF 973.31 Uni. More than can be briefly summarized. For the military buff, fascinating reading if you enjoyed McCullough's 1776. Look for the early drafts of the Declaration of Independence in particular for the "hand" of Dr. Franklin as well as Mr. Adams.

Naval Documents of the American Revolution, 1774-1783. 10 vols. Washington, DC: GPO, 1964-1996. VA REF 973.35 Uni. While Washington was awaiting the British evacuation of Boston, he was already planning to move the troops to the far more strategic city, New York, as he explained in a letter to John Hancock. (vol. 4, p. 318).

The Records of The Virginia Company of London, 1607-1626. 4 vols. Washington, DC: GPO, 1906. VA REF 975.5 V. What was the justification for "planting [colonizing] Virginia?" (See vol. 3, p. 1). And further along on p. 704, "The manner howe to bringe in the Indians into subiection wthout makinge an vtter exterperation of them together wth the reasons." Also available on CD: VA REF CD-ROM 975.501 Vir.

The Virginia Gazette, 1736-1780. The newspaper of record for the Colony. Microfilm #00040. How was the news of the Declaration of Independence covered in this newspaper? Was it more or less than you expected? Index on top of the microfilm cabinets. From what other colonies do we also have newspapers on microfilm?

...and to decipher it all

Reading Early American Handwriting, by Kip Sperry. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, Co., 1998. VA REF 652.1 Spe

Slavery and Abolition

Black Laws of Virginia, by June Purcell Guild. New York: Negro Universities Press, 1936. VA REF 342.087 Gui. Could "free negroes" vote in Seventeenth Century Virginia? And when in the Eighteenth Century was the right to vote taken away?

Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America. 4 vols. Ed. by Elizabeth Donnan. New York: Octagon Books, 1965. VA REF 306.362 Doc. The seminal documents are those of Portuguese traders of the 1440s who implemented the industrial-scale waterborne export of African slaves to Europe, and terminate with "An Act to Prohibit the Importation of Slaves into the United States, 1807."

The North Star, Dec. 3, 1847 – April 17, 1851. Microfilm #00125. Frederick Douglass' abolitionist newspaper published in Rochester, NY. How was the April 1848 escape of 77 slaves from Georgetown, DC on the "Pearl" covered in this newspaper?

Native Americans and the West

The American Indian and the United States; A Documentary History. 4 vols. Ed. by Wilcomb E. Washburn. Westport, CT, Greenwood Press, 1973. VA REF 323.1197. Documents range from 1778 into the 1970s and include: treaties; Reports of Commissioners for Indian Affairs; Congressional debates and Acts; and legal decisions. Excellent for studying the “total package” of an issue, for example, the removal of the Cherokee from Georgia, 1830. What was the outcome of the lawsuit filed by the Cherokee against the United States?

The Civil War

The Civil War Diary of Anne S. Frobel of Wilton Hill in Virginia. Ed. by Mary H. and Dallas M. Lancaster. Birmingham, AL: Birmingham Printing and Publishing Co., 1986. VA REF 973.782 Fro. The setting is Federal occupied Alexandria and nearby Franconia. The experience of one woman and her family.

“Confederate Corner”

Confederate Military Manuscripts; Series A: Virginia Historical Society. Ed. by Joseph T. Glatthaar. Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 1997. VA REF 973.742 Sch. Index to the 42 roll microfilm collection (Microfilm #00609). Collection also includes personal papers.

The New York Times, Sept. 1851 – Oct. 1877. Microfilm #00049. How was the Emancipation Proclamation received by several constituencies, for example the Confederate Congress, the British, the French? Index on top of the microfilm cabinets. What other newspapers do we have on microfilm that cover the Civil War period?

Proceedings of the Virginia State Convention of 1861. 4 vols. Ed. by George H. Reese. Richmond, Virginia State Library, 1965. VA REF 320.9755 Vir. Covers February 13 – May 1. For those who are interested in the minutiae of the Secession debate.

War of the Rebellion Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. 128 vol., series 1. 95 vol., series 2. VA REF 973.7 Uni. The nitty-gritty of reports, correspondence, orders, etc. Series 1 indexing is 19th century and is limited. We prefer the full text CD: Army Official Records. Great Boolean searching, for example: “railroads [and] Alexandria [not] Louisiana,” or “pohick [and] fairfax [and] occoquan” with each term within “x” words of each other. WOW!

Online Indexes and Exhibits

Most of our other unique, unpublished primary resources related to local history are indexed and the indexes are available online: www.alexandria.lib.va.us/lhsc/colls.html These include maps, manuscripts and archives, microfilm, blueprints, Civil War era prints, etc.

We have numerous online exhibits of local history materials unique to the Alexandria Library: www.alexandria.lib.va.us/lhsc/exhibit.html